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O 200614Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8427
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5886
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3762
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2261
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6970
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0907
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4343
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0565
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 6709

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Assad/Anan, Syria/Iraq,
Syria/Indonesia, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories (4/19)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported that President Asad
discussed developments in Iraq and Lebanon in a phone call to UN
SecGen Kofi Anan. Both sides expressed hope for a softening of
tension in the region.

Papers also reported that President Asad conferred with Rostam
Tamboraka, Chairman of the Indonesian-Syrian Parliamentary
Friendship Association, and that discussion focused on bilateral
relations and challenges confronting the Islamic world.

Syrian papers also featured a statement by Sufian al-Allao,
Syrian Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, denying Syria's
involvement in any illegal operation by any Iraqi company
working in oil trade between the two countries, in response to
media reports about the smuggling of Iraqi petroleum to Syria by
tank truck. The Minister announced that the Syrian and Iraqi
governments are implementing an agreement for exchange of oil
and electricity products in accordance with an agreement signed
between the two countries on 28/8/2003 and renewed on 5/1/2006.
"Syrians are providing Iraqis with benzene, home kerosene and
electricity, and we are paid for these materials with Iraqi fuel
to Syria," he noted. He said that the Syrian government had tens
of contracts with private companies to import the Iraqi fuel to
Syria.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses the situation in Iraq and Lebanon in a
phone call to UN SecGen Kofi Annan" (Government-owned Tishreen,
4/19)

"President Asad receives an Indonesian delegation and reiterates
the importance of coordination between the two friendly
countries" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/19)

"Petroleum Minister: Syria has nothing to do with Iraqi oil
smuggling" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/19)

"President Lahoud: Lebanon has overcome the most difficult situation. Lebanese parties and personalities commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Qana massacre committed by Israeli occupation: Our unity makes Israeli plans a failure" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/19)

"Norway will start dialogue with Hamas. Washington moves to maintain siege on Palestinians. Israel threatens to liquidate Palestinians and withdraws IDs of MPs of the Palestinian Legislative Council in Jerusalem" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/19)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"To Be Encouraged"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/19) "Syria's announcement that it will open the door for Syrian citizens to make donations for the Palestinian people is in line with the inclinations of the Arab street, which realizes that there is a desperate need to support Palestinians at this stage, especially because of the American and European position, which punishes the Palestinian people for their democratic choices....

"If this Syrian position, in its essence, expresses Syria's commitment to the Palestinian people and their causes, it is also another sign affirming that commitment to the requirements of Arab masses and the fulfillment of their aspirations can be achieved away from all the vituperation and excuses that are being offered....

"No matter how far the Arab governments go in their compliance with foreign pressure, they cannot but offer real aid to the Palestinian people. They cannot abandon Palestinians under any excuse, because there is a sweeping popular Arab sympathy toward the Palestinians and their options....

"When Syria opens the door for donations to help the Palestinian people, it realizes that similar steps will be taken by many Arab and Islamic countries, and that those who are hesitant to offer aid or to meet members of the new Palestinian government will definitely be encouraged to get closer to reality and become more appreciative of the facts of the situation."

"Required Positions"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (4/19): "Arab and Islamic financial and political support for the Palestinian people is a human and ethical duty and a logical response to the American-European support for Israel in its open war against the Palestinians....

"Syria has decided to launch a donation campaign for Palestinians and Qatar and Iran have offered \$150 million to help the Palestinian Authority.... But this is not enough to prevent the human disaster assailing the Palestinian people from all directions....

"The Arab and Muslim worlds must spare no effort to support the Palestinian cause in international fora and to expose Israeli aggression and force Israel to implement UN resolutions...."

"In Order to Have an Accomplished Independence"

Elias Murad, chief editor of government-owned Al-Ba'th,

commented on the 60th anniversary of Syria's independence on (4/19): "As we commemorate Evacuation Day with mixed feelings of pain and yearning, we are distressed because the hands of Israeli occupiers are still tampering with Syrian Arab territory in the Golan, because the establishment of the Palestinian state has not been completed, and because Jerusalem, which contains Islamic and Christian holy places, is being attacked and Judaized in an attempt to abolish its Arab character and identity. And we yearn to meet our steadfast kinsfolk and see our land in the Golan. But these must not remain mere emotions. We must move from words to action through a multifaceted resistance against the Israeli occupation forces. The enemy, which totally ignores all international resolutions, apparently understands one language only, the language of resistance, in which the Arabs and the Syrians are definitely fluent...."

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